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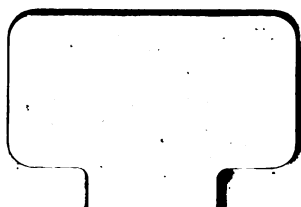
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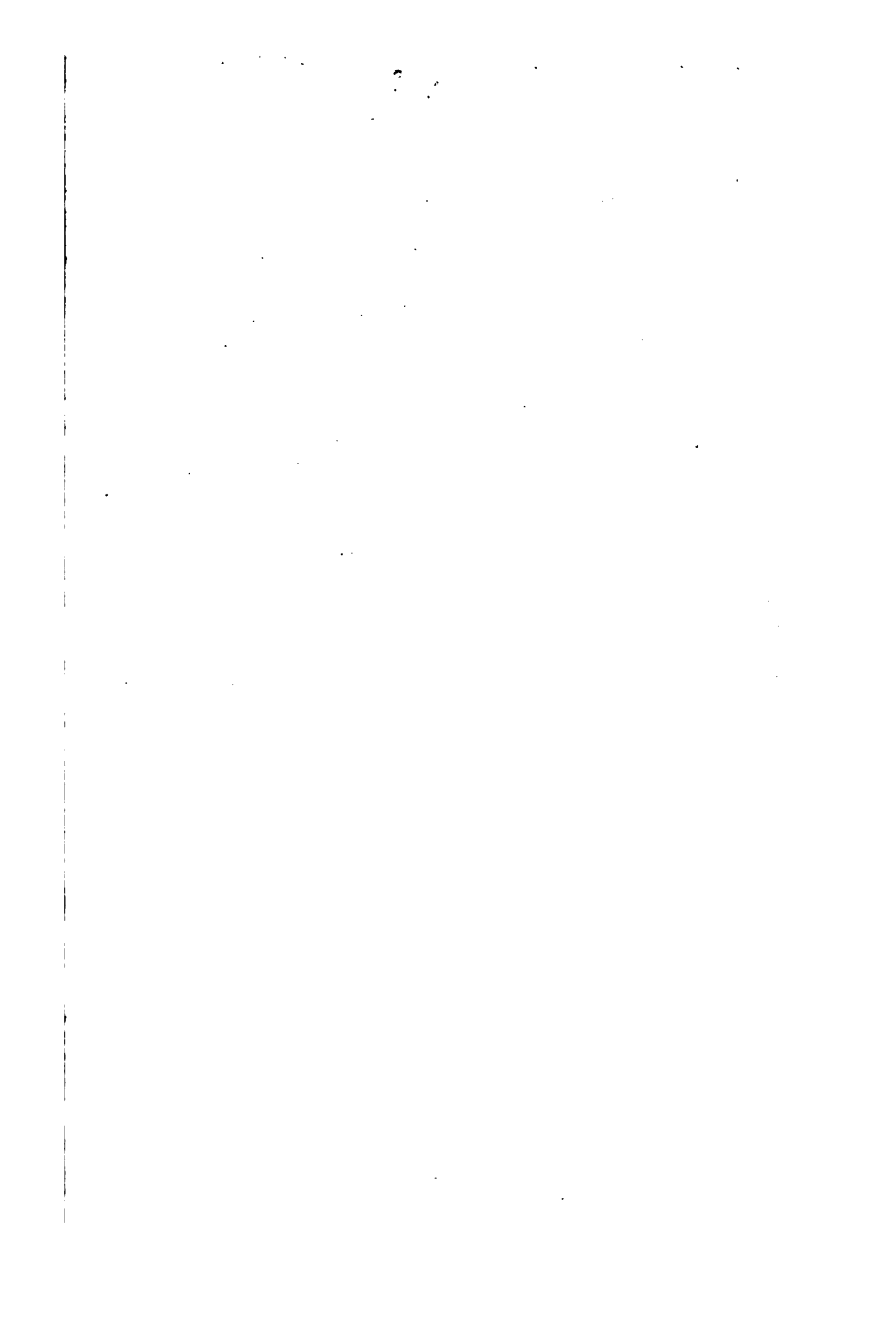
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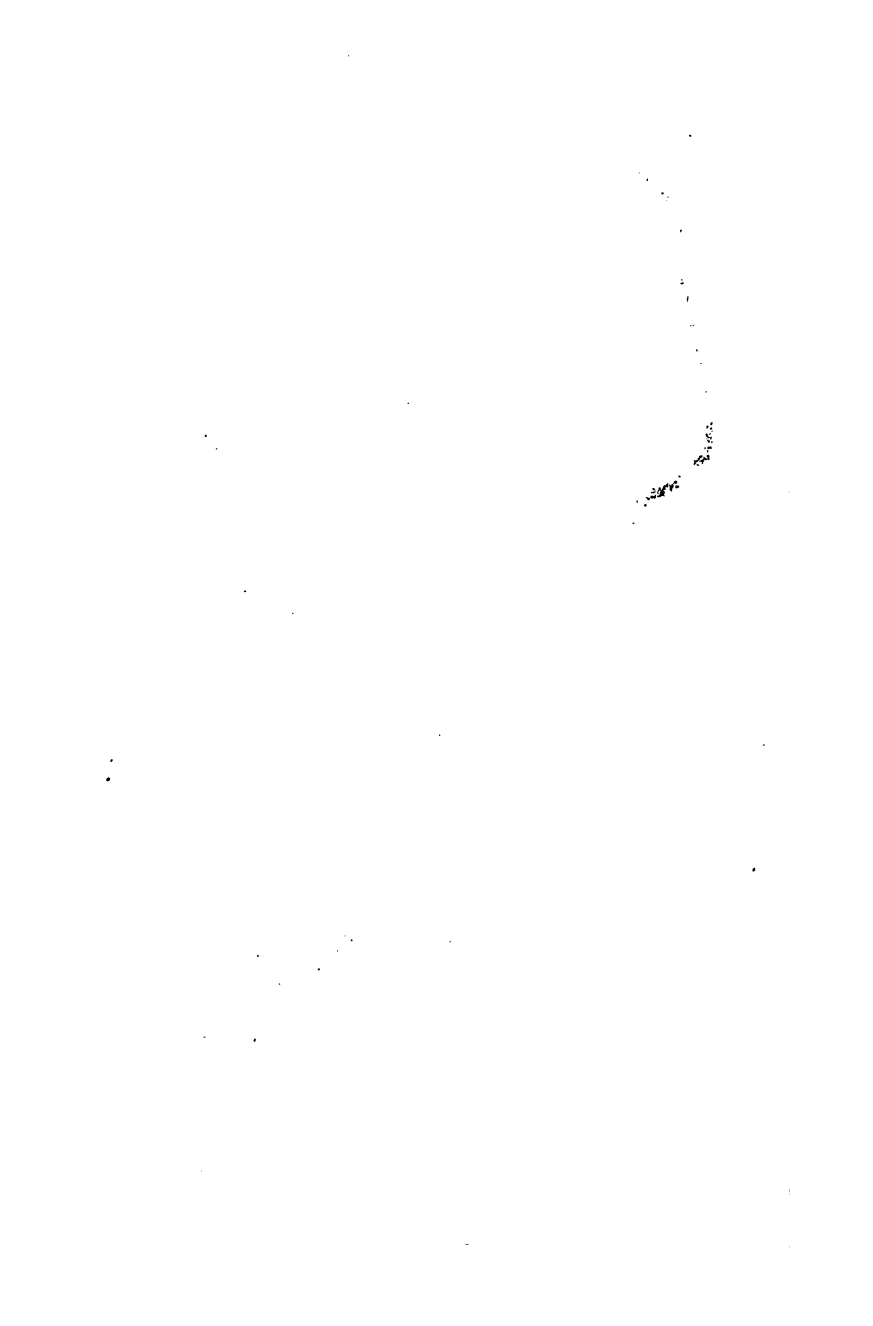




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ORATORY MADE EASY.

A GUIDE

TO THE

COMPOSITION OF SPEECHES.

Original and Compiled.

BY

CHARLES HARTLEY,

PROFESSOR OF ELOCUTION AND ORATORY; AUTHOR OF
"ELOCUTION MADE EASY."



LONDON:

GROOMBRIDGE AND SONS,
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ORATORY MADE EASY.



INTRODUCTION.

THE value of Oratory is generally acknowledged, and the arts of extemporaneous public speaking, preaching, lecturing, and pleading, are powers which will be increasingly demanded by the changed and still changing aspects of affairs in Church and State. "In all countries, and in all ages," says Serjeant Cox, "the orator has risen to distinction. But his art is nowhere so potent as in free countries, where liberty of speech is the birthright of the citizen. Wherever self-government is recognized, there must be gatherings for the purpose of transacting public business; men must meet together in their parishes, their counties, or by whatever name the sub-divisions of their country may be known. They could not discuss the business of the meeting without some speaking, and the most pleasant speaker will assuredly win the ears, and therefore carry with him the feelings and the votes, of those who cannot speak. The same result is seen in all assemblies, from the vestry, which is the Parliament of the parish, to the House of Commons, which is the Parliament of the nation. A man who cannot speak is there doomed to insignificance; a man who can speak but badly is still somebody; the man who speaks tolerably is a man of mark; the man who speaks well, at once establishes himself as a chieftain, and he holds in his hand the power of the whole assembly." Yet a great orator is

a rarity, and a tolerably good one uncommon; for the art is neglected not only by non-professional speakers, but by those whose chief business it is to speak in public. The *Literary Churchman* is "of opinion that the present age, with all its vauntings, has not many orators, whether in sacred or secular walks. Parliament has two or three, the bar one, the stage none at all (taking delivery as a form of oratory), the Church more than all the rest together, though the circumstances and conventionalities by which preachers are hampered, are not favourable to the display of elocutionary gifts. It is a matter of surprise that so few clergymen, whose education, as far as books are concerned, has been all that can be desired, and whose written discourses are admirable, should be able to say twenty consecutive words in public, whether with or without preparation. There seems to be no sort of excuse for it. Many, no doubt, are by natural temperament unfitted to address assemblies, and incapable of any approach to effective public speaking; but where there is no natural disqualification, since the art may be cultivated, there is no reason why any man called to influence others should be ignorant of it." The dissenting ministers are much more fluent than the clergy of the Church of England, simply because they have had far more practice, and have been accustomed from their youth to public speaking.

Yet speaking is an art which may be learned as surely as singing or dancing. To be really eloquent is in the power of few; to say what one has to say to an assembly fluently, intelligibly, and not disagreeably, is in the power of almost every man. If the practice of this art be commenced in youth, almost all might be trained to express themselves with propriety, fluency, and self-possession, whether in the pulpit, or the senate, from the platform or lecture-table. But in the great public schools in which most of our clergy, senators, and barristers are educated,

the art of public speaking is not taught as it ought to be. "At Eton, once a year," observes an able writer, "a few boys at the head of the school, trained by masters, themselves unaccustomed to public speaking, declaim a few speeches with very moderate success; and a small debating-society, with which the masters do not interfere, exists; it is, we are told, merely a limited and fashionable club, whose members—but twenty-eight in number—are elected, not on account of their literary acquirements, but chiefly because they are the 'swells' of the school, or because they have distinguished themselves at cricket or in rowing. Much good would be done, were such an institution as this widened, popularized, and stimulated, and were its members properly instructed in speaking by a practised teacher who himself knew how to speak, so that every boy, on leaving Eton at the age of seventeen, might be able to impart audibly, confidently, and pleasantly, to an audience of a couple of hundred of his schoolfellows, whatever he was desirous of saying to them."

Yet very many persons devote not the slightest attention to this subject, until circumstances compel them to speak in public when far advanced in life. The task, even then, although much more difficult, is not insurmountable, and a man past his prime may still become a fluent and powerful speaker if he will but devote sufficient time to the study and practice of the art.

Authors and scholarly men are apt to think themselves disqualified for becoming good public speakers. This is also the popular idea, but it is evidently incorrect, for although the three arts of reading, speaking, and writing differ to a certain extent, the same education which fits a man for excellence in one will qualify him for excellence in all, if he will but cultivate his powers and practise the other arts. A really good reader may, if he please, become a really good speaker and writer, and a really good writer only

requires confidence and the practice of the tongue to become a good reader and speaker. Demosthenes, Cicero, Burke, Sheridan, Brougham, and many others, excelled in all. Garrick might have been distinguished as an orator and author; while those who heard Byron declaim from *Zanga* in "The Revenge," at Harrow, were of opinion that he would have equalled Edmund Kean had he devoted his genius to the stage. Numerous similar instances might be adduced.

POWER OF ART.

Among the many causes of this neglect of the art of public speaking, probably the chief is the common but mistaken idea that oratory is a gift, notwithstanding the dictum, "Orator fit, poeta nascitur" (the orator is made, but the poet is born).

Demosthenes and Cicero, the two greatest orators that the world has seen, are remarkable instances of the value of art. The former, the greatest Grecian orator, was originally so bad a speaker that he was hissed from the presence of his audience. He possessed the highest genius, great knowledge, and had been taught by the wisest men of his age, but, being deficient in the arts both of composition and delivery, he failed. Determined to overcome every obstacle to success he studied and practised more than any orator of whose labours we have record, and his perseverance was crowned with the greatest oratorical triumph the world has known.

Thus art enabled him to overcome many natural defects, bad habits, and difficulties, but it was the perception and conviction that he possessed oratorical genius which caused him to devote such great study and practice to art. Without this genius he would have become an excellent orator, but not a great one.

Cicero, the chief of the Roman orators, devoted the greatest attention to art, of which his work, *De Oratore*, affords ample proof. Dean Kirwan, one

of the greatest preachers of modern times, Curran, and numerous other examples might be adduced of the power of art to develop and perfect natural genius, and to overcome defects and bad habits.

"Taught by art," says Mr. Rowton, "the student will gather wisdom, enlarge his mind, cultivate his perception, exercise his imagination, strengthen his memory, accumulate ideas, supply himself with facts and illustrations, practise himself in logic, proof, and philosophy, observe the emotions of feeling and passion, learn how to portray them, and beyond all this train his mind into habits of thought and virtue, and his physical powers into pliancy, gracefulness, and strength. This, you may depend, will make a man a far greater orator than he will become under the mere impulse of genius, or aided by the most extended human knowledge. Mere genius will never make an orator, nor will mere knowledge, nor will mere art : it is only by a union of the three that a successful orator can be formed."

The greatest orators, from Demosthenes down to the present time, have failed at first. The shouts of laughter with which Mr. Disraeli's maiden speech was received by an assembly generally indulgent to first attempts, did not crush the aspirant for power. He, like Sheridan, felt that there was something in him, and he merely uttered a prophecy, since fulfilled—"The time will come when you *shall* listen to me." In a memoir of the life of the celebrated preacher, Robert Hall, by Dr. Gregory, it is stated that, when a student at Bristol, he had to preach in his turn at Broadmead Chapel. After proceeding for a short time, he suddenly stopped, covered his face, exclaimed, "I have lost all my ideas," and sat down. The second attempt was a failure more painful to witness. Hall tried again, and the world knows with what success.

VARIOUS KINDS OF ORATORY.

To treat thoroughly of these would require a separate work for each. The oratory of the pulpit, the senate, the bench, the bar, the lecture-room, the professional chair, and the platform are so different from each other, that their details are best studied by example; the best of all advice is that of experienced colleagues, and the best exercise actual practice.

Oratory is the term applied to the whole art of public speaking; a speech is the ordinary form of addressing an assembly, being somewhat more elevated in style than common conversation; and an oration is a more grand, complete, and elaborate form of public speech.

Oratory is of two sorts—the *extemporaneous* and the *studied*, *i.e.*, written out more or less elaborately, committed to memory, and recited. The ancient orations were generally of the latter kind. It undoubtedly approaches the nearest to the perfection of oratory if uttered by a master of delivery, but in this delivery lies its great difficulty. The ancients attached the highest importance to this point, as may be seen in the treatises of Cicero and Quintilian: they considered that it was one half of eloquence at the least; and Demosthenes made it the orator's chief qualification, for when he was asked what was the first point of eloquence, the second, and the third, he answered, "Delivery, delivery, delivery." The moderns, especially the English, fall into the opposite extreme. But lacking this great mastery of delivery such studied speeches appear unnatural and without soul, and consequently do not produce half the effect of an inferior extemporaneous speech moderately well delivered. Moreover, very few persons have memories sufficiently retentive to remember a long oration, and those who have may,

from nervousness or other causes, at any time, and often when least expected, forget an important sentence, grow confused, become thoroughly disconcerted, and make an utter failure in the delivery of a well-written speech.

Some celebrated orators commit to memory the exordium or peroration, or both; but this plan is subject to the preceding objections, and also requires great skill in blending the delivery of the studied and the extemporaneous portions into one style of delivery.

Each orator should study his own capabilities and peculiarities, and adopt that mode which best suits him. But, upon the whole, the plan of the prepared extemporaneous speech will be found the best for most speakers.

To speak *extempore* (pronounced with each vowel sounded; from *ex*, out of, and *tempus*, time) strictly means to speak upon the impulse of the moment without any preparation whatever, but it is generally applied to prepared speech delivered as if from impulse. It combines many of the advantages of impulsive and studied speech. Purely extemporaneous oratory is now usually called *impromptu* speaking, and requires so many natural and acquired gifts, that it should not be attempted by any but great speakers. Reply in Parliament is necessarily of this description.

PREPARED SPEECH.

The student of oratory should avoid the conceited practice of trusting entirely to extemporaneous effort. A course so inconsiderate and absurd is sure to induce a loose, rambling, obscure style, at all times distasteful to an intelligent audience. In his earliest attempts he should prepare himself for speaking as fully as possible, by pre-arranging his arguments, and write out the whole of the more important parts

of his speech, especially the commencement and conclusion. It is most important that he should make a good commencement and an effective conclusion. As on the stage a good exit has saved many a badly-acted scene, while a bad exit has frequently obliterated the effect of good acting, and brought a fine scene to a "most lame and impotent conclusion," so in public speaking, many an otherwise indifferent speech has proved highly successful through a telling peroration, while a superior speech has fallen flat on the ears of the auditors, and the speaker has sat down disappointed through his neglect of this important point.

Those who think that the careful preparation of the language of a speech despoils it of its claim to be considered really eloquent, either forget or have never known that the Grecian and Roman orators who have ever been held by the critics of all nations as the greatest models of eloquence, always wrote out their speeches and committed them to memory. Demosthenes and Cicero both did so. Indeed, the most eloquent oration of Cicero was written out, but never delivered, although it has been read, studied, and admired by the critics, orators, and scholars of all countries for more than eighteen hundred years. In our own parliamentary history we have a still more remarkable example of the paradox of the most eloquent speaker of the time preparing carefully the points and illustrations with which his famous speeches were adorned apparently on the impulse of the moment. Richard Brinsley Sheridan was sarcastically taunted with being "the right honourable gentleman who is indebted to his imagination for his facts, and to his memory for his wit," which simply meant that the stinging sarcasms which he seemed to throw off spontaneously in the heat and excitement of debate, had been generally thought over, modelled, and polished as they occurred to his mind, and kept in his memory ready for use whenever any good opportunity presented itself. Shiel and Macaulay, the

most finished rhetoricians of the present age, wrote out considerable portions of their most brilliant speeches.

Lord Brougham says:—"I should lay it down as a rule, admitting of no exception, that a man will speak well in proportion as he has written much; and that with equal talents, he will be the finest extempore speaker, when no time for preparation is allowed, who has prepared himself most sedulously when he had the opportunity of delivering a pre-meditated speech."

The great Latin rhetorician, Quintilian, declares that the pen is the best instructor in the art of speaking. Not less true is it that the use of the pen conduces most effectually to the general culture of the mind. There is more real exercise of thought in one hour's composing than in a day's reading. Besides, the pen compels you to understand what you study, for you cannot express what is not intelligible to yourself. The pen also exacts arrangement and introduces order. Indeed, what we read is hardly our own until we have given it utterance in our own language. To repeat to another what we have read, impresses it strongly on the memory, but to write out what we have read is the surest way of appropriating it.

"Writing," says Bautain, "is a whetstone, or flattening engine, which wonderfully stretches ideas, and brings out all their malleableness and ductility. If you have time for preparation, never undertake to speak without having put on paper the sketch of what you have to say, the links of your ideas. You thus possess your subject better, and, consequently, speak more closely, and with less risk of digressions. When you write down a thought you analyze it. The division of the subject becomes clear, becomes determinate, and a crowd of things which were not before perceived, present themselves under the pen. Speaking is thinking aloud, but it is more; it is thinking

with method and more distinctly, so that in embodying your idea, you not only make others understand it, but you understand it better yourself, while spreading it out before your own eyes, and unfolding it by words. Writing adds more still to speech, giving it more precision, more fixity, more strictness, and by being forced more closely to examine what you wish to write down, you extract hidden relations, you reach greater depths, wherein may be disclosed rich veins or abundant lodes. Experience teaches us that we are never fully conscious of all that is in our own thoughts, except after having written it out. So long as it remains shut up in the mind, it preserves a certain haziness. We do not see it completely unfolded, and we cannot consider it in all its aspects and bearings. Make your plan at the first impulse, and follow your inspiration to the end; after which let things alone for a few days, or at least for several hours. Then re-read attentively what you have written, and give a new form to your plan; that is, re-write it from one end to the other, leaving only what is necessary, what is essential. Strike out inexorably whatever is superfluous. Only take pains to have the principal features well marked, vividly brought out, and strongly connected, in order that the division of the discourse may be clear, and the links firmly welded."

When you have written your speech, condensed, re-written, corrected and improved it as much as possible, read it aloud sufficiently often to thoroughly remember the main idea, its development, divisions, and their connecting links—everything except the exact words. Then stand up and speak it aloud to an imaginary audience; it will be better if to a judicious friend, and better still if to a master of the art. You should go over it mentally an hour or so before speaking it in public.

Mr. Percy Fitzgerald in his "Life of Charles Townshend, Wit and Statesman," gives the following

account of Townshend's method of "getting up" his speeches :—

"A clerk who had been with the family let Mr. Malone into the workshop, where the fireworks were got ready. He said Charles Townshend's habit was to dictate his speeches to him for hours, on one side of the question—then go out, talk over the matter with people of different views and opposite opinions, and then dictate a fresh speech. In this way he exhausted the subject. When the time for him to speak came, he never spoke what he had so carefully prepared; but passages which had been studied insensibly suggested themselves, and were presented in a new and more spirited setting. He had, therefore, all the security of preparation without its constraint and formality, and this seems to be the best shape of eloquence—far better than the loose carelessness of extempore speaking, and the artificial monotony of what had been got ready beforehand."

CONSTRUCTING A SPEECH.

Composition, as preliminary to speaking, may be either written, or merely arranged by mental process. Every speaker should propose to himself a plan, and not rise with a head full of matter, without order or any principle of selection.

The first requisite is that you should have *something to say*, not that you merely *want to say something*. If you can say no more than what has been already said, you had best hold your peace, unless you can express it more vividly, in a new light, or clothe it with a style that shall charm the hearers, and so make an impression by the originality of manner in place of the originality of matter.

Above all, you must decide upon what point you intend to speak. Nothing is worse than vagueness in a speech; it produces obscurity, diffuseness, verbosity, contradictions and extravagance in the

speaker, and weariness and dissatisfaction in the hearer. A vague speaker is like a blind guide, who undertakes to show the way which he himself does not see.

Every address, whether from the pulpit, the senatorial bench, the chair of the professor, or the bar, should have a leading object—a point to which everything said should be subordinated. The orator's leading purpose, or dominant idea, should supply the key to the tone and structure of the discourse, and affect all the inferior parts. Keep closely to this main idea. Nothing is so fatal to extemporaneous speaking as the habit of going too far into details, to the neglect of the main idea which should present itself conspicuously in each part of the speech, the hearer being led back to it by the development of the accessory thoughts.

Proportion the parts of your speech fairly. The exordium is often too long; the peroration interminable, and the middle too short. Every speech should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The commencement is styled the exordium, and the conclusion the peroration. This is the usual division; but some speeches require further subdivisions according to their nature.

In extemporaneous speaking, you should take particular care to arrange the divisions and proportions of your speech so as never to lose sight of them, but be able to recall the hearer from digressions which cannot always be avoided, from new ideas too vivid to be excluded, and from those spontaneous bursts of feeling or passion which your judgment tells you ought not to be suppressed.

When you have not time to prepare a plan, you should, nevertheless, not begin to speak without having made a general view, however brief, decided upon the main point and line of the speech, and sketched in your mind an outline of its most prominent features. In such a case precepts are of little

use; good sense, tact, self-possession, and a clear head, are necessary to grasp the one point and keep a firm hold of it; and for this purpose the best plan is to put it into form at once by some expression or proposition which will reduce the subject to its simplest shape.

SHORT SPEECHES.

The following sound advice abridged from the chapter headed "*Le Discours doit être court*," of the French work entitled, "*Cours d'Eloquence Sacrée Populaire*," by M. l'Abbé Mullois, Chaplain to the Emperor Napoleon III., although specially addressed to the clergy will apply equally to all public speakers, for a long sermon, like Hydra with a hundred heads, is not more wearying than many a secular speech taking hours in delivery, and unnecessarily occupying columns in the newspaper, to the annoyance of all but its prosy author.

"The sermon should be short; at all costs it must not weary the hearers. Besides, what good, what motive is there in so much talk? I know not how it is that we have been drawn into these long discourses. Our Saviour's instructions were brief. His Sermon on the Mount, which has revolutionized the world, does not appear to have taken up half an hour. The homilies of the fathers, too, were generally short. Ask whom you will, enemies and friends, nay, ask the most intelligent and devout Christians, and they will tell you that our sermons and services are too long. If such is their candid judgment, what must be the opinion of the masses? It would undoubtedly benefit religion were we to abridge our sermons, and our services also. As regards the former, this may be done easily, and without the least detriment. Omit all generalities from the exordium, all useless demonstrations from the body of the discourse, all vague phrases from the peroration. Cut off all super-

fluity of words, all parasitical epithets, admitting only such as triple the force of the substantive. Be chary of words and phrases; economize them as a miser does his coin. The masses are susceptible; they like to be moved; but nothing passes away so quickly as an emotion. To make them frequent our churches we must give them sermons of ten minutes' duration, of seven, even of five minutes. But, it will be objected, what can be said in seven or ten minutes? Much, much more than might be imagined, especially if the preacher takes pains to prepare his sermon, mastering his subject, and knowing the persons whom he addresses. Is it not so, that a few words have frequently sufficed to revolutionize the minds of men, and to produce an immense effect? The harangues of Napoleon did not last more than a few minutes, and yet they electrified his armies. The discourse at Bordeaux, which did not take up a quarter of an hour, resounded throughout the world; had it been longer, the impression which it produced would have been less. When about to compose your sermon, first study your topic, seizing the salient points of the truth you are going to expound, and then write. But do not stop there. Begin afresh. Supposing you have written four pages, reduce them to two, retaining all the thoughts and vigorous ideas of your first draft."

The Abbé, I think, gives too short a limit, and such brief sermons would suit the French taste better than the English. But the principle is correct. Whitfield is reported to have said that a man with the eloquence of an angel, ought not to exceed forty minutes in the length of a sermon, and it is well known that Wesley seldom exceeded thirty. "I have almost always found," says another eminent preacher, "that the last fifteen minutes of a sermon an hour in length, was worse than lost, both upon the speaker and the congregation."

COMMAND OF LANGUAGE.

Every public speaker should commit passages from the best authors to memory. All speech is made up of words and phrases, and consequently a man whose memory is well stored with the best passages of the great poets, orators, and prose writers, is seldom, if ever, at a loss for language in which to express his thoughts. A provincial actor—frequently a man of very little education—often has to appear before a large, noisy, and dissatisfied audience, at a minute's notice, to make an apology or explanation, which he couches in better language than is generally used by any but the very best public speakers, simply because his memory is stored with thousands of lines from our great dramatists, and an abundance of words and phrases are at his command. But in seeking to acquire fluency of speech the orator must still more studiously develop a sound body of thought to clothe with words, "the dress of thought," lest he should become a speaker of the "wind-bag" class, so often mentioned as having a "very fine command of language," "when, perhaps," as Whately observes, "it might be said with more correctness, that 'his language has a command of him,' *i.e.*, that he follows a train of words rather than of thought, and strings together all the striking expressions, that occur to him on the subject, instead of first forming a clear notion of the sense he wishes to convey, and then seeking for the most appropriate vehicle in which to convey it. He has but the same 'command of language' that the rider has of a horse which runs away with him."

READING AND THINKING.

An orator should read much, in order to store his mind with knowledge upon every subject upon which he may be called to speak, and make notes of everything likely to be useful at a future time. But much

reading will be of little benefit without thought. "It is good to read, mark, learn," says Cameron, "but it is better to inwardly digest. It is good to read, better to think—better to think one hour than to read ten hours without thinking. Thinking is to reading (if the book read have anything in it) what rain and sunshine are to the seed cast into the ground, the influence, which maketh it bear and bring forth, thirty, forty, a hundred fold. To read is to gather into the barn or storehouse of the mind; to think is to cast seed corn into the ground to make it productive. To read is to collect information; to think is to evolve power. To read is to lay a burthen on the back; but to think is to give to the feet swiftness, to the hands strength. Yet we have a thousand or ten thousand readers for one thinker, as the kind of books sought after in circulating libraries bear witness."

He should acquire the habit of thinking clearly through every subject which engages his attention, and not vaguely, or upon parts only. A man should not attempt to think closely upon any important subject when he is not in good health, when fatigued, or soon after a good meal. An excellent time for thinking is when he is taking any slight exercise in the open air, as walking, or angling.

"Although we think by nature," says the Abbé Bautain, "yet there is an art of thinking, which teaches us to do with greater ease and certainty what our nature, as rational beings, leads us to do spontaneously. Man learns how to think as he learns how to speak, read, write, and sing, to move his body gracefully, and to use all the powers of mind and body. Logic teaches the art of thinking. The orator, therefore, must be a good logician; not theoretically, but practically. It is not his business to know how to declaim about the origin and formation of ideas, nor about the four operations of thought. It is not the method of teaching, but the use of

logic, which he requires—and a prompt and dexterous familiarity with it. We, in this point of view, and to a certain degree, regret the old syllogistic method of the schools; for we are convinced that, properly applied and seriously directed, it gives quickness, subtlety, clearness, and something sure and firm to the mind, rarely found in the thinkers of the present day. The fault formerly, perhaps, was in the excess of the dialectical turn, by which the style became spoilt by dryness, heaviness, and an appearance of pedantry. Still, men knew how to state a question, and how to treat it: they knew at which end to begin it, in order to develop and solve it; and the line of the argument, distinctly marked out, led straight to the object and to its conclusion. The fault now-a-days is in an absence or deficiency of method. People remain a long time before their subject, without knowing how to begin it, even though they rightly understand its very terms. This superinduces interminable preparations, desultory introductions, a confused exposition, a disorderly development, and finally, no conclusion, or, at least, nothing decisive. There are not many men in our day who know how to think, and develop a subject in such a way as to instruct and interest those who listen to them. A horror is everywhere felt for rules, or for what imposes constraint, and, as nearly all the barriers have been removed which supported and protected human activity, by obliging it to exert itself within fixed lines, liberty has become disordered, men swerve from the track in order to walk at their ease; and, far from gaining by it, they lose great part of their time and strength in seeking a path which would have been shown them from the outset, had they chosen to accept of discipline, and to allow themselves to be guided. In order to think in their own fashion, or to be original, they think at random, just as ideas happen to come; and the upshot, for the most part, is vagueness, oddity, and confusion.

This is the era of the vague and the almost. Everybody wants to speak of everything, as everybody wants to interfere in everything; and the result is, that amidst this flood of thought, this overflow of divergent or irreconcilable words and actions, the minds of men, tossed to and fro, float uncertain, without a notion where they are going, just as the wind blows or the current drives."

Lord Bacon observes that, "Reading maketh a full man; thinking, a wise man; conference, a ready man; and writing, an exact man."

STYLE.

"It is requisite for an orator," says Archbishop Whately, "to observe the rules of grammar; but the same may be said of the poet, and the historian, etc. Nor is there any *peculiar* kind of grammatical propriety belonging to persuasive or argumentative compositions; so that it would be a departure from our subject to treat at large, under the head of Rhetoric, of such rules as equally concern every other of the purposes for which language is employed." But as this little work is intended for all who have to speak in public, and men of talent, but neglected education, will be among that number, as well as many who have forgotten the grammar to a great extent, I beg leave to refer them to a small work of mine upon that subject, specially designed for those who never learned, or have forgotten it.*

Some writers have affirmed that style cannot be taught, since as a great author has said, "the style is the man," and that all directions for acquiring it are useless. But I believe that "style" in the apothegm was intended to mean the mental characteristics expressed in the sentences more than the diction and construction. The martial walk and bearing of the

* See "Hartley's Grammatical Remembrancer for Adults," price 1s. Groombridge and Sons, 5, Paternoster Row, London.

soldier have been acquired, and blended with his personal peculiarity form his style, which is more or less original in proportion to the strength of his natural manner. Nearly all the great actors, artists, and musical composers have had different styles at different periods of their lives, each of such styles except the last having been mainly formed upon some great man's style, and the last combining the excellences of the others, with their own most original and striking characteristics. I believe that it is the same with respect to literary composition.

"Wherever there is real and native genius," says Dr. Blair, "it gives a determination to one kind of style rather than another. Where nothing of this appears; where there is no marked or peculiar character in the compositions of any author, we are apt to infer, not without reason, that he is a trivial author who writes from imitation, and not from the impulse of original genius. As the most celebrated painters are known by their hand, so the best and most original writers are known and distinguished, throughout all their works, by their style and peculiar manner. This will be found to hold almost without exception."

An orator should read a portion of some great writer of English daily, not only to gain knowledge and high thoughts, but also to keep his style pure and free from the contaminating influence of the sensational, spasmodic trash and loose, slipshod writing which every one is more or less compelled to read. Ten minutes' daily reading of Dryden, Swift, Cobbett, Macaulay, Thackeray, Dr. Newman or other great master of English, will infuse vigour into the style and keep it pure. The last three are undoubtedly the greatest masters of style that this age has produced. He should read the passage aloud, even if alone, by which means he will better understand the meaning, appreciate the choice of words, perceive the construction of the sentence, the mastery of style and beauty of its rhythm.

The student should begin with seeking to acquire what is most essential—the judicious choice of language, and a clear, concise, and sufficiently compact mode of arrangement; afterwards, to proceed gradually to the study of those particulars which are more matters of taste, and admit of wider discretionary power. But in any case, and on any occasion, attention to style must not engross us so much as to detract from a higher degree of attention to the thoughts. Quintilian says:—"To your expression be attentive; but about your matter be solicitous."

Dr. Blair observes, that "It is an obvious but material rule, with respect to style, that we always study to adapt it to the subject, and also to the capacity of our hearers. Nothing merits the name of eloquent or beautiful, which is not suited to the occasion, and to the persons to whom it is addressed. It is to the last degree awkward and absurd to attempt a poetical, florid style, on occasions when it should be our business only to argue and reason; or to speak with elaborate pomp of expression before persons who comprehend nothing of it, and who can only stare at our unseasonable magnificence. These are defects, not so much in point of style, as what is much worse, in point of common sense. When we begin to write or speak, we ought previously to fix in our minds a clear conception of the end to be aimed at, to keep this steadily in our view, and to suit our style to it. If we do not sacrifice to this great object every ill-timed ornament that may occur to our fancy, we are unpardonable; and though children and fools may admire, men of sense will laugh at us and our style." But we must remember that, as Boileau observes, "the lowest style may have still an elevation."

Quintilian says:—"Eloquence admits of many different forms; and nothing can be more foolish than to inquire by which of them an orator is to regulate his composition; since every form, which is

in itself just, has its own place and use. The orator, according as circumstances require, will employ them all; suiting them, not only to the cause or subject of which he treats, but to the different parts of that subject."

"A composition is then perfect, when the matter rises out of the subject; when the thoughts are agreeable to the matter, and the expressions suitable to the thoughts; where there is no inconsistency from the beginning to the end; when the whole is perspicuous in the beautiful order of its parts, and formed in due symmetry and proportion."

HASTY COMPOSITION.

In order to form a good style, the frequent practice of composing is indispensably necessary. No rules or directions will avail without constant practice. But it is not every sort of composing that will improve the style. By frequent careless and hasty composition we shall acquire a bad style, and have more trouble afterwards, in discontinuing faults and correcting negligences, than if we had not practised composition at all. In the beginning, therefore, we ought to write slowly, and with much care. Ease and speed of writing will come with practice. Quintilian says:—"I enjoin that such as are beginning the practice of composition write slowly, and with anxious deliberation. Their great object at first should be, to write as well as possible; practice will enable them to write speedily. By degrees, matter will offer itself still more readily; words will be at hand; composition will flow; everything, as in the arrangement of a well-ordered family, will present itself in its proper place. The sum of the whole is this: by hasty composition, we shall never acquire the art of composing well; by writing well, we shall come to write speedily."

Dr. Blair says, "That sort of composition is, doubt-

less, most useful, which relates to the profession or kind of public speaking, to which persons addict themselves. This they should keep ever in their eye, and be gradually innuring themselves to it. But let me also advise them, not to allow themselves in negligent composition of any kind. He who has it for his aim to write, or to speak correctly, should, in the most trivial kind of composition, in writing a letter, nay, even in common discourse, study to acquit himself with propriety. I do not mean that he is never to write or to speak a word but in elaborate and artificial language. This would form a stiffness and affectation worse than the greatest negligence. But there is in everything a manner which is becoming, and has propriety; and opposite to it, there is a clumsy and faulty performance of the same thing."

FORMING A STYLE.

No exercise will be found more useful for acquiring a good style than to translate a passage from an eminent English author into your own words; that is, to take, for instance, a passage from Addison, Macaulay, Thackeray, or some other master of style, and read it carefully over three or more times, till you remember the thoughts contained in it; then to lay aside the book, write out the passage from memory, in the best way you can, and having done so, next to open the book, and compare what you have written with the author's own language. Such an exercise will, by comparison, show where the defects of your style lie; will lead you to the proper means for rectifying them; and among the different ways in which the same thought may be expressed, will show you which is the most appropriate, vigorous, or beautiful.

But a servile imitation of any one author whatever must be avoided. This is always dangerous. It hampers genius; it is likely to produce a stiff manner;

and those who closely imitate any author generally imitate his faults as well as his excellences. No man will ever become a good writer or speaker, who has not some degree of confidence in his own powers. We ought to beware in particular, of adopting any author's noted phrases. Every one who writes or speaks should, indeed, study to have somewhat that is his own, that is peculiar to himself, and that characterizes his composition and style. But withal, there is no genius so original, but may be profited and assisted by the aid of good examples, in style, composition, and delivery. They always open some new ideas; they serve to enlarge and correct our own. They quicken the current of thought, and excite emulation.

Much, indeed, will depend upon the right choice of models which we purpose to imitate; and supposing them rightly chosen, we should be most careful to avoid a blind admiration of any one author. Even in the most finished models we can select, it must not be forgotten that there are generally some things improper for imitation. We should study to acquire a just perception of the peculiar excellences that characterize the speaker or writer, and imitate these only. One ought never to attach himself too closely to any single model; for he who does so is almost sure to fall into a faulty and affected imitation. He should imitate the excellences of several, and combine them into one style, into which his own natural characteristics should be infused.

COPIOUSNESS AND CONCISENESS.

Archbishop Whately says, "Some hearers and readers will be found slow of apprehension indeed, but capable of taking in what is very copiously and gradually explained to them; while others, on the contrary, who are much quicker at catching the sense of what is expressed in a short compass, are

incapable of *long* attention, and are not only wearied, but absolutely bewildered, by a diffuse style.

“When a numerous and very mixed audience is to be addressed, much skill will be required in adapting the style, (both in this, and in other respects,) and indeed the arguments also, and the whole structure of the discourse, to the various minds which it is designed to impress; nor can the utmost art and diligence prove, after all, more than partially successful in such a case, especially when the diversities are so many and so great, as exist in the congregations to which most sermons are addressed, and in the readers for whom popular works of an argumentative, instructive, and hortatory character are intended. It is possible, however, to approach indefinitely to an object which cannot be completely attained; and to adopt such a style, and, likewise, such a mode of reasoning, as shall be level to the comprehension of the greater part, at least, even of a promiscuous audience, without being distasteful to any.

“Extreme conciseness is ill-suited to hearers or readers whose intellectual powers and cultivation are but small. The usual expedient, however, of employing a *prolix* style by way of accommodation to such minds, is seldom successful. Most of those who could have comprehended the meaning, if more briefly expressed, and many of those who could not do so, are likely to be bewildered by tedious expansion; and being unable to maintain a steady attention to what is said, they forget part of what they have heard, before the whole is completed. Add to which, that the feebleness produced by excessive dilution, (if such an expression may be allowed,) will occasion the attention to languish; and what is imperfectly attended to, however clear in itself, will usually be but imperfectly understood. Let not an author, therefore, satisfy himself by finding that he has expressed his meaning so that, *if* attended to, he

cannot fail to be understood; he must consider also *what* attention is likely to be paid to it. If, on the one hand, much matter is expressed in very few words to an unreflecting audience, or if, on the other hand, there is a wearisome prolixity, the requisite attention may very probably *not* be bestowed.

“The best general rule for avoiding the disadvantages both of conciseness and of prolixity is to employ *repetition*; that is, to repeat the same sentiment and argument in many different forms of expression; each, in itself, brief, but, all, together, affording such an expansion of the sense to be conveyed, and so detaining the mind upon it, as the case may require. Cicero among the ancients, and Burke among the modern writers, afford, perhaps, the most abundant practical exemplifications of this rule. Care must of course be taken that the repetition may not be too glaringly apparent; the variation must not consist in the mere use of other, synonymous, words; but what has been expressed in appropriate terms may be repeated in metaphorical; the antecedent and consequent of an argument, or the parts of an antithesis may be transposed; or several different points that have been enumerated, presented in a varied order.” Addison, in his *Cato*, affords an excellent example:—

“The dawn is overcast; the morning lowers,
And heavily in clouds brings on the day.”

Dr. Campbell observes, that “it is certain that of whatever kind the sentiment be, witty, humorous, grave, animated, or sublime, the more *briefly* it is expressed, the energy is the greater. As when the rays of the sun are collected into the focus of a burning-glass, the smaller the spot is which receives them compared with the surface of the glass, the greater is the splendour; so, in exhibiting our sentiments by speech, the narrower the compass of words is, wherein the thought is comprised, the more energetic is the expression. Accordingly, we find

that the very same sentiment expressed diffusely, will be admitted barely to be just; expressed concisely, will be admired as spirited." He afterwards remarks, that though a languid redundancy of words should in all cases be avoided, its opposite of energetic brevity is not equally suitable to every subject and occasion, and that it is the least adapted to "the descriptive, the pathetic, the declamatory, especially the last. It is, besides, much more suitable in writing than in speaking. A reader has the command of his time; he may read fast or slow, as he finds convenient; he can peruse a sentence a second time when necessary, or lay down the book and think. But if, in haranguing the people, you comprise a great deal in few words, the hearer must have uncommon quickness of apprehension to catch the meaning before you have put it out of his power, by engaging his attention to something else."

In a postscript to one of the "Provincial Letters," Pascal excuses himself for the letter being so long, on the plea that he had not had time to make it shorter.

DICTION OR LANGUAGE.

"The connection between sentiment and diction," says Harris, "is so intimate, that the same sentiment, where the diction differs, is as different in appearance as the same person dressed like a peasant or dressed like a gentleman; and hence we see how much diction merits a serious attention. Take the following example, 'Don't let a lucky hit slip; if you do, belike you mayn't any more get at it.' The sentiment is expressed clearly, but the diction is rather vulgar and low. Take it another way—'Opportune moments are few and fleeting; seize them with avidity, or your progression will be impeded.' Here the diction, though not low, is rather obscure. The words are unusual, pedantic, and affected. But what says Shakespeare?"

“ ‘There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune ;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat ;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.’ ”

“ Here the diction is elegant, without being vulgar or affected ; the words, though common, being taken under a metaphor, are so far estranged by this metaphorical use, that they acquire, through the change, a competent dignity, and yet, without becoming vulgar, remain intelligible and clear.”

PURITY AND PROPRIETY.

Purity of style consists in the use of such words and phrases as belong to the idiom of the language, in opposition to words and phrases which are foreign, obsolete, or used without proper authority.

Propriety of style consists in the use of such words and phrases as are best adapted to express our meaning, in opposition to low expressions, and to words and phrases less significant of the ideas which we mean to convey.

This adherence to plain and expressive language is preferable to bombast, or straining to produce effect. The language of the day should be spoken, or, as Quintilian says, “ an orator should use words like pieces of money, with which he ought not to incommode himself when they are not current.”

Style may be pure ; that is, it may all be strictly English, without foreign words or ungrammatical, irregular expressions, and may, nevertheless, want propriety. The words may be ill-chosen, and not adapted to the subject. Style cannot be proper without being also pure ; and where purity and propriety are united, the style becomes not only perspicuous but elegant. There is no standard either

of purity or propriety, but the practice of the best writers and speakers in the language.

The propriety of a word must be tested by *reputable*, *national*, and *present* use.

Reputable use is the employment of a word by authors of established reputation, such as Dryden, Addison, Swift, Pope, Johnson, Gibbon, Byron, Southey, Scott, Campbell, Macaulay, Thackeray, Tennyson, and others of equal standing. When it can be shown that several of such writers have used a certain word in serious composition, that word is held as sanctioned, and has received the stamp of authority; but its use by a single writer, however eminent, is not considered as decisive authority.

National use is opposed to provincial or foreign. Every province in the empire has its peculiar and local terms, or peculiar and local meanings, attached to good national words. Both should be avoided.

Present use is opposed to *obsolete* on the one hand, and *novel* on the other. In science and art, terms may become antiquated in the course of a few years. Hence, present use in technicalities should be limited to the practice of living men. In general literature, as history, travels, moral essays, etc., it is not advisable to use any word which has been unemployed within the last half century. Poetry admits words which would be considered obsolete in prose, and they are frequently used with admirable effect. Byron has used Spenserian words in "Childe Harold;" but, as a general rule, any word peculiar to authors earlier than Milton cannot safely be revived by ordinary writers.

New words may be readily adopted when used by eminent scientific writers, because discoveries are daily made, for which terms must be invented, or at least applied in a new sense; but in general literature it is not justifiable, and we should guard against the capricious fancies of certain writers, who are constantly seeking, by singularity of style, and the in-

vention of new and unnecessary words, to produce an effect which they cannot attain by originality of thought.

Poetry admits of greater latitude than prose with respect to coining, or, at least, new-compounding words; yet even here this liberty should be used with a sparing hand. In prose, such innovations are more hazardous, and have a worse effect. They are apt to give style an affected and conceited air, and should never be ventured on except by those whose established reputation gives them some degree of dictatorial power over language.

When choice lies between two or more words equally appropriate, one being Saxon-English and the other Latin-English, the Saxon-English should have the preference, for such words are generally shorter, more forcible, and more familiar than those derived from Greek or Latin. The tendency of good authors for some years past has been to recur to them. One says, "I would never say *felicity* if I could say *happiness*." The use of Latin-English, however, is often desirable to give elevation and elegant variety to style. The proportion of admixture requires the exercise of taste and judgment. The student should practise translating one set of words into the other, so as to have both at command.

Archbishop Whately advises public speakers to observe that "obvious rule laid down by Aristotle, to avoid uncommon, and, as they are vulgarly called, *hard words*, that is, those which are such to the persons addressed. Those who wish to be understood by the lower orders of the English" should "prefer terms of *Saxon* origin, which will generally be more familiar to them than those derived from the Latin (either directly, or through the medium of the French) even when the latter are more in use among persons of education. Our language being (with very trifling exceptions) made up of these elements,

it is very easy for anyone, though unacquainted with Saxon, to observe this precept, if he has but a knowledge of French or of Latin ; and there is a remarkable scope for such a choice as I am speaking of, from the multitude of synonymes derived respectively from those two sources. The compilers of our liturgy being anxious to reach the understandings of all classes at a time when our language was in a less settled state than at present, availed themselves of this circumstance in employing many synonymous, or nearly synonymous expressions, most of which are of the description just alluded to. Take as an instance the exhortation—‘ acknowledge ’ and ‘ confess ; ’—‘ dissemble ’ and ‘ cloke ; ’—‘ humble ’ and ‘ lowly ; ’—‘ goodness ’ and ‘ mercy ; ’—‘ assemble ’ and ‘ meet together. ’ And here it may be observed that (as in this last instance), a word of French origin will very often not have a *single word* of Saxon derivation corresponding to it, but may find an exact equivalent in a *phrase* of two or more words ; for example, ‘ constitute, ’ ‘ go to make up ; ’—‘ suffice, ’ ‘ be enough for ; ’—‘ substitute, ’ ‘ put in the stead, ’ etc. It is worthy of notice, that a style composed chiefly of words of French origin, while it is less intelligible to the lowest classes, is characteristic of those who, in cultivation of taste, are below the highest. As in dress, furniture, deportment, etc., so also in language, the dread of vulgarity constantly besetting those who are half conscious that they are in danger of it, drives them into the extreme of affected finery.”

Generally speaking, the best and most proper expressions are those which a clear view of the subject suggests, without much labour or inquiry after them. Quintilian says:—“ The most proper words for the most part adhere to the thoughts which are to be expressed by them, and may be discovered as by their own light ; but we hunt after them as if they were hidden, and only to be found in

a corner. Hence, instead of conceiving the words to lie near the subject, we go in quest of them to some other quarter, and endeavour to give force to the expressions we have found out."

MISAPPLIED WORDS.

Many a ludicrous anecdote is told of persons venturing to use words of which they did not know the proper application, and many a ridiculous blunder has been published, to the lasting disgrace of the speaker. Who can tell how much of his own good or ill-luck, how much of the favour or disregard with which he himself has been treated, may have depended upon that skill or deficiency in grammar, composition, and delivery, of which, as often as he has either spoken or written, he must have afforded a certain and constant evidence? An imprudent expression in conversation may be forgotten and pass away; but when we take the pen into our hand, we should remember that "*Litera scripta manet*" (the written letter remains); and the reporter makes the words of the public speaker equally permanent.

The use of foreign words and phrases, unless where necessity requires them, should always be avoided. It shows affectation. Barren languages may need such assistance, but ours is not one of these. Whately observes that, "It is a curious instance of whimsical inconsistency, that many who, with justness, censure as *pedantic* the frequent introduction of Greek and Latin words, neither object to, nor refrain from, a similar pedantry with respect to French and Italian. This kind of affectation is one of the 'dangers' of 'a little learning.' Those who are really good linguists are seldom so anxious to display their knowledge. It has been the fashion of late years with some few authors to write a sort of bastard English, full of *German* idioms, and of new-coined words fashioned on a German model. This passes with some persons for uncommon *eloquence*;

which it resembles in being 'uncommon.' Some readers again, of better taste than not to condemn this style, are yet so far deceived by it as to imagine a great profundity in the thoughts conveyed; the oddness of the expression giving an air of originality to much that would probably appear trite if said in plain English."

MONOSYLLABLES.

It has been considered a fault in our language that it abounds in monosyllables; but the fault is rather in the abuse of them. Many of our monosyllables are remarkable for strength, melody, or sonorousness, if properly pronounced. But they should be fairly mixed with longer words, and care should be taken not to conclude a sentence with a crowd of them, those especially of the vulgar, unharmonious kind, such as "to set it up," "to get by and by at it," for these spoil a sentence that may be otherwise good, and are like the rabble at the close of some pompous cavalcade.

SPECIFIC TERMS

Are, in most cases, preferable to general ones. "The more general the terms are," says Dr. Campbell, "the picture is the fainter; the more special they are, the brighter. The same sentiment may be expressed with equal justness, and even equal perspicuity, in the former way, as in the latter; but as the colouring will in that case be more languid, it cannot give equal pleasure to the fancy, and by consequence will not contribute so much either to fix the attention or to impress the memory."

The whole of Gray's *Elegy* is a specimen of the use of terms conveying exact ideas. Take the opening lines:—

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herds wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homewards plods his weary way."

Now, let them be altered thus, substituting general words, and the poverty of expression will immediately be evident:—

“The church-bell strikes the hour of closing day,
The noisy cows go slowly o’er the fields,
The labourer onwards walks his tiresome way.”

Here “church-bell” is general, but “*curfew*” means an evening-bell with an historical reference; “strikes” includes many ideas, “*tolls*” has a specific, solemn power; “hour” is vague, “*knell*” is peculiarly appropriate as a *funeral* term to the end of the day; “closing” has not the pathos of “*parting*”; “noisy cows,” “go,” and “fields,” are not so poetic as “*lowing herds*,” “*wind*,” and “*lea*”; the “labourer” is vague, “ploughman” is strictly rural; “onward” is indefinite, “*homeward*” calls up a definite, domestic picture; “walks” does not exhibit the dull, mechanical motion of the tired ploughman so well as “*plods*”; and “tiresome” is not as expressive as “*weary*.”

VARIETY OF LANGUAGE

Should generally be employed where possible, that is, the same word, or even syllable, should not be repeated within a short distance. In the Lord’s Prayer, from its antithesis, a peculiarly fine effect is produced by repetition. “Give us this *day* our *daily* bread; and *forgive* us our *trespasses* as we *forgive* them that *trespass* against us,” cannot be altered without destroying the sublime simplicity of the prayer. But in general language and writing it is different. Lindley Murray has the following sentence:—“A *long* succession of either *long* or short sentences should be avoided; for the ear tires of either of them when too *long* continued.” “Lengthened” might have been used for the first “long,” and the last might have been dispensed with by saying:—“The ear tires of a continuation (or continued use) of

either." "He returned from the *turmoil* of war," is an example of the recurrence of a syllable. It might have been expressed by "He *withdrew* from the *turmoil*," or "*returned* from the *tumult* of war."

TOO GREAT CARE ABOUT WORDS.

But, as Dr. Blair justly observes :—"There may be an extreme in too great and anxious a care about words. We must not retard the course of thought, nor cool the heat of imagination, by pausing too long on every word we employ. There is, on certain occasions, a glow of composition which should be kept up, if we hope to express ourselves happily, though at the expense of allowing some inadvertencies to pass. A more severe examination of these must be left to the work of correction. For if the practice of composition be useful, the laborious work of correction is no less so; it is indeed absolutely necessary to our reaping any benefit from the habit of composition. What we have written should be laid by for some little time, till the ardour of composition be past, till the fondness for the expressions we have used be worn off, and the expressions themselves be forgotten; and then reviewing our work with a cool and critical eye, as if it were the performance of another, we shall discern many imperfections which at first escaped us. Then is the season for pruning redundancies; for weighing the arrangement of sentences; for attending to the juncture and connecting particles; and bringing style into a regular, correct, and supported form. This *Limæ Labor et mora* (the labour and delay of the file) must be submitted to by all who would communicate their thoughts with proper advantage to others; and some practice in it will soon sharpen their eye to the most necessary objects of attention, and render it a much more easy and practicable work than might at first be imagined."

Quintilian says :—"In youth, I wish to see luxuriance of fancy appear. Much of it will be diminished by years; much will be corrected by ripening judgment; some of it, by the mere practice of composition, will be worn away. Let there be only sufficient matter, at first, that can bear some pruning and lopping off. At this time of life, let genius be bold and inventive, and pride itself in its efforts, though these should not, as yet, be correct. Luxuriance can easily be cured; but for barrenness there is no remedy."

EPITHETS

Are adjectives expressing some quality, attribute, or relation, that is properly or specially appropriate to a person or thing; as, a *verdant* lawn; a *brilliant* appearance; a *just* man, etc. "The name epithet," says Webster, "was formerly extended to nouns which give a title or describe character (as liar, etc.), but is now confined wholly to adjectives. Some rhetoricians, as Whately, restrict it still further, considering the term *epithet* as belonging only to a limited class of adjectives, viz., those which add nothing to the sense of their noun, but simply hold forth some quality necessarily implied therein; as, the *bright* sun, the *lofty* heavens, etc. But neither Johnson nor Richardson has imposed this restriction, which certainly does not prevail in general literature. It is sometimes improperly confounded with *appellation*, which is always a noun or its equivalent."

Young authors are apt to imagine that force or elegance is added by the accumulation of high-sounding epithets, denoting the greatness, beauty, or other admirable qualities of the things spoken of; the reverse is the case. An adjective should never be used to express anything which is obviously included in the noun, as, the *glorious* sun, the *ferocious* tiger, unless it is desirable to remind the reader of a quality which might not spontaneously occur to him, and

which forms the feature to be particularly borne in mind. The judicious use of them is undoubtedly conducive to energy.

"Their business," observes Felton, "is to express the nature of the things they are applied to ; and the choice of them depends upon a good judgment, to distinguish what are the most proper titles to be given on all occasions, and a complete knowledge in the accidents, qualities, and affections of everything in the world. They are of most ornament when they are of use. They are to determine the character of every person, and decide the merits of every cause ; conscience and justice are to be regarded, and great skill and exactness are required in the use of them. For it is of great importance to call things by their right names ; the points of satire, and strains of compliment depend upon it ; otherwise we may make an ass of a lion ; commend a man in satire, and lampoon him in panegyric. Here also there is room for genius ; common justice and judgment should direct us to say what is proper at least ; but it is parts and fire that will prompt us to the most lively and most forcible epithets that can be applied ; and it is in their energy and propriety that beauty lies.

"The boldest and most striking, and almost poetical turns of expression," says Whately, "should be reserved, as Aristotle has remarked, for the most impassioned parts of a discourse ; and an author should guard against the vain ambition of expressing *everything* in an *equally* high-wrought, brilliant, and forcible style. The neglect of this caution often occasions the imitation of the best models to prove detrimental. When the admiration of some fine and animated passages leads a young writer to take those passages for his *general* model, and to endeavour to make every sentence he composes equally fine, he will, on the contrary, give a flatness to the whole, and destroy the effect of those portions which would have been forcible if they had been allowed to stand

prominent. To brighten the dark parts of a picture, produces much the same result as if one had darkened the bright parts; in either case there is a want of *relief* and *contrast*; and composition, as well as painting, has its lights and shades, which must be distributed with no less skill, if we would produce the desired effect."

· PRECISION,

"From '*precidere*,' to *cut off*, imports retrenching all superfluities, and pruning the expression, so as to exhibit neither more nor less than an exact copy of his idea who uses it. In order to write with precision, though this be properly a quality of style, one must possess distinctness and accuracy in his manner of thinking. The words which a man uses to express his ideas may be faulty in three respects: they may either not express that idea which the author intends, but some other which only resembles or is akin to it; or they may express that idea, but not quite fully or completely; or they may express it, together with something more than he intends. Precision stands opposed to all these three faults, but chiefly to the last. In an author's writing with propriety, his being free from the two former faults seems implied. The words which he uses are proper; that is, they express that idea which he intends, and they express it fully; but to be precise signifies that they express that idea, and no more. There is nothing in his words which introduces any foreign idea, any superfluous, unseasonable accessory, so as to mix it with the principal object, and thereby to render our conception of that object loose and indistinct. This requires a writer to have, himself, a very clear apprehension of the object he means to present to us; to have laid fast hold of it in his mind; and never to waver in any one view he takes of it—a perfection, indeed, to which few writers attain."

“What is called a loose style is the opposite to precision. It generally arises from using a superfluity of words. Feeble writers employ a multitude of words, to make themselves understood, as they think, more distinctly; and they only confound the reader. They are sensible of not having caught the precise expression, to convey what they would signify; they do not, indeed, conceive their own meaning very precisely themselves; and, therefore, help it out, as they can, by this and the other word, which may, as they suppose, supply the defect, and bring you somewhat nearer to their idea. They are always going about it, and about it, but never just hit the thing. The image, as they set it before you, is always seen double; and no double image is distinct. When an author tells me of his hero's *courage* in the day of battle, the expression is precise, and I understand it fully. But if, from the desire of multiplying words, he will needs praise his *courage* and *fortitude*, at the moment he joins these words, my idea begins to waver. He means to express one quality more strongly; but he is, in truth, expressing two. *Courage* resists danger; *fortitude* supports pain. The occasion of exerting each of these qualities is different; and being led to think of both together, when only one of them should be in my view, my view is rendered unsteady, and my conception of the object indistinct.”

Precision of style, therefore, consists in the use of such expressions as convey simply the idea which we have in view, and in the rejection of all superfluous words and phrases; in opposition to a loose and diffuse mode of expression. In order to write with precision, it is necessary to attend to the exact signification of words. Words having nearly the same meaning to others are commonly said to be

SYNONYMES.

It is rare, however, to find two words of exactly the same signification ; and among several of those called *synonymes*, one is generally more suitable than the rest to express a particular idea.

"If no words are *synonymous*," says Webster, "except those which are *identical* in use and meaning, so that the one can in all cases be substituted for the other, we have scarcely ten such words in our language. But the term more properly denotes that the words in question approach so near to each other, that, in many or most cases, they can be used interchangeably. Words may thus coincide in *certain* connections, and so be interchanged, when they cannot be interchanged in other connections ; thus, we may speak either of *strength* of mind, or of *force* of mind, but we say the *force* (not *strength*) of gravitation. Two words may differ slightly, but this difference may be unimportant to the speaker's object, so that he may freely interchange them. Thus, it makes but little difference, in most cases, whether we speak of a man's having *secured* his object, or having *attained* his object. For these and other causes we have numerous words which may, in many cases or connections, be used interchangeably, and these are properly called *synonymes*." "Synonymous words," Archbishop Trench says, "are words which, with great and essential resemblances of meaning, have at the same time, small, subordinate, and partial differences—these differences being such as either originally, and on the ground of their etymology, inhered in them—or differences which they have by usage acquired in the eyes of all, or such as, though nearly latent now, they are capable of receiving at the hands of wise and discreet masters of the tongue. *Synonymes* are words of like significance in the main, but with a certain unlikeness as well."

Thus, *intellect*, *genius*, and *talent*, though frequently used for each other, have appropriate meanings. *Intellect* is understanding; there cannot be *genius* or *talent* without *intellect*, but there may be *intellect* without *genius* or *talent*. *Intellect* is general, the others are specific. *Intellect* is required in various degrees, for success in any business; *talent* has reference to particular pursuits, as a talent for learning languages, imitation, etc.; whereas *genius* is more rare and more imaginative, as a genius for poetry, music, painting, etc.*

PERSPICUITY.

The most important quality of a good style is perspicuity. It is, as Dr. Blair says, "the fundamental quality of style; a quality so essential in every kind of writing, that for the want of it nothing can atone. Without this the richest ornaments of style only glimmer through the dark, and puzzle instead of pleasing, the reader. This, therefore, must be our first object, to make our meaning clearly and fully understood, and understood without the least difficulty. If we are obliged to follow a writer with much care, to pause, and to read over his sentences a second time, in order to comprehend them fully, he will never please us long. Mankind are too indolent to relish so much labour; they may pretend to admire the author's depth after they have discovered his meaning, but they will seldom be inclined to take up his work a second time." The same observation applies with greater force to a speaker's style. If his language is not perspicuous, the hearer will not be able to follow him with ease and pleasure, but will be thinking of the meaning of one sentence while the speaker is uttering another. A written sentence can be read again and again, examined, and

* See "Sherer's Desk-book of English Synonymes," price 3s. 6d. Groombridge and Sons, 5, Paternoster Row, London.

its meaning sought out. An obscure style of speaking has thus every disadvantage of an obscure style of writing, with the additional and irremediable evil that the auditor cannot hear the sentence a second time.

"Discourse ought always to be obvious," says Quintilian, "even to the most careless and negligent hearer; so that the sense shall strike his mind, as the light of the sun does our eyes, though they are not directed upwards to it. We must study, not only that every hearer may understand us, but that it shall be impossible for him *not* to understand us."

Perspicuity of style depends upon the choice of words and phrases, and on the structure of sentences.

Perspicuity in the use of words and phrases requires *purity*, *propriety*, and *precision*.

Perspicuity in the structure of sentences requires *clearness*, *unity*, and *strength*.

Perspicuity depends chiefly on placing all modifying terms, so as to bear as directly as possible on the words to which they refer. For example:—Swift says, in "Gulliver's Travels," "It contained a warrant for conducting me and my retinue to Traaldragdubb, or Trildrogdrib, for it is pronounced both ways, as near as I can remember, by a party of ten horse." The clause, "by a party," is intended to modify "conducting me and my retinue;" but as it stands, it more easily conveys that this difficult word is pronounced both ways by a party of ten horse. In the "Guardian," No. 10, the following sentence occurs: "I perceived it had been scoured with half an eye," conveying that the *half eye* had *scoured* the article in question. Again, "He advanced against the fierce ancient, imitating his address, his pace, and career, as well as the vigour of his horse, and his own skill would allow." Here the clause, "as well as the vigour of his horse," appears at first to be connected with career, and therefore to

be one of the things imitated. Of course, the least reflection in the reader at once corrects the impression; but in a speech such ill arrangement of words either causes a laugh at the speaker's expense, if the fault is perceived, or obscurity in the mind of the hearer who has not time to examine the sentence. It is a fundamental rule of good composition, that no false idea requiring after-correction should be produced in the mind.

LONG AND SHORT SENTENCES.

A continued succession of short sentences should generally be avoided. The most pleasing effect is produced by commencing each paragraph with one or more short sentences, and drawing it to a close with longer ones. But even this, if constantly maintained, becomes monotonous.

Long words and long sentences are more musical than short ones; but energy, where called for by the subject, must not be sacrificed to rhythm. A full, well-rounded period is pleasing to the ear, but a composition becomes monotonous and tiresome when every sentence is sonorously rounded at the close. To command variety, without sacrificing either propriety or precision, requires great command of words, accurate knowledge of their meaning, and much practice in writing.

Whately says, "It is an obvious caution to abstain from such as are too long, but it is a mistake to suppose that the obscurity of many long sentences depends on their length alone. A well-constructed sentence of very considerable length may be more readily understood than a shorter one which is more awkwardly framed. If a sentence be so constructed that the meaning of each part can be taken in as we proceed (though it be evident that the sense is not brought to a close), its length will be little or no impediment to perspicuity, but if the former part of

the sentence convey no distinct meaning till we arrive nearly at the end (however plain it may then appear), it will be, on the whole, deficient in perspicuity; for it will need to be read over, or *thought over*, a second time in order to be fully comprehended; which is what few readers or hearers are willing to be burdened with. An author is apt to be misled by reading over a sentence to himself, and being satisfied on finding it perfectly intelligible; forgetting that he himself has the advantage, which a hearer has not, of knowing at the beginning of the sentence what is coming in the close. And hence it is that some do not write or speak with so much perspicuity on a subject which has long been very familiar to them, as on one which they understand, indeed, but with which they are less intimately acquainted, and in which their knowledge has been more recently acquired. In the former case it is a matter of some difficulty to keep in mind the necessity of carefully and copiously explaining principles which by long habit have come to assume in our minds the appearance of self-evident truths. Utterly incorrect, therefore, is Blair's notion, that obscurity of style necessarily springs from indistinctness of conception. A little conversation on nautical affairs with sailors, or on agriculture with farmers, would soon have undeceived him."

It is an excellent exercise to take a passage and vary the arrangement of the sentences, trying which form is most clear and rhythmical.

TROPES AND FIGURES.

A figure is a mode of expressing abstract or immaterial ideas by words which suggest pictures or images from the physical world; thus Macaulay says, "To represent imagination under the *figure* of a wing."

Some authors make *figures* the genus, of which

trope is a species ; others make them different things, defining *trope* to be a change of sense, and *figure* to be any ornament, except what becomes so by such change. Strictly speaking a *figure* regards a sentence, and a *trope* is the proper term with respect to a word used figuratively, the word *trope* meaning literally a turn, a change in the signification of a word from a primary to a derivative sense ; that is, the use of a word or expression in a different sense from that which properly belongs to it, for the sake of giving life or emphasis to an idea.

By some they have been called the language of nature ; by others, the language of fancy and passion. Both definitions are correct, for they are used naturally by the savage, artistically by the civilized, and by both in the expression of feeling and passion.

They may be used in ordinary prose but with moderation, and more freely in rhetorical composition, such as a grand and studied oration. The excessive use of figurative language in prose should be avoided. It constitutes the florid style, which is only proper for what may be called poetical prose. Figurative language is peculiarly proper to, and forms a great part of, the language of poetry. The finest examples of figurative language are to be found in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, and in the great orators and poets. The figure of speech in most use is the

METAPHOR.

A metaphor expresses resemblance without the sign of comparison ; as "Thy word is (*as*) a lamp to my feet, and (*as*) a light to my path." The resemblance is not stated but implied. Language belonging to sensible objects is also used in metaphors concerning mental ones, as "*Cromwell trampled on the laws.*"

Metaphors may be employed, as Aristotle observes, either to elevate or to degrade the subject, according

to the design of the author; being drawn from similar or corresponding objects of a higher or lower character. Thus a loud and vehement speaker may be described either as *bellowing*, or as *thundering*, and in both cases, if the metaphor is apt and suitable to the purpose designed, it is alike conducive to energy. He remarks that the same holds good with respect to epithets also, which may be drawn either from the highest or the lowest attributes of the things spoken of. *Metonymy* likewise admits of a similar variety in its applications.

"A metaphor," says Harris, "is the transferring of a word from its usual meaning to an analogous meaning, and then the employing it agreeably to such transfer. For example, the usual meaning of evening is the conclusion of the day. But age too is a conclusion; the conclusion of human life. Now there being an analogy in all conclusions, we arrange in order the two we have alleged, and say, that as evening is the day, so is age to human life. Hence, by an easy permutation (which furnishes at once two metaphors) we say alternately, that evening is the age of the day; and that age is the evening of life. There are other metaphors equally pleasing, but which we only mention, as their analogy cannot be mistaken. It is thus that old men have been called stubble; and the stage, or theatre, the mirror of human life. In language of this sort there is a double satisfaction: it is strikingly clear; and yet raised, though clear, above the low and vulgar idiom. It is a praise too of such metaphors, to be quickly comprehended. The similitude and the thing illustrated are commonly dispatched in a single word, and comprehended by an immediate and instantaneous intuition."

"They ought not in an elegant and polite style to be derived from meanings too sublime; for then the diction would be turgid and bombastic. Such was the language of that poet who, describing the

footman's flambeaux at the end of an opera, sung or said,

"'Now blazed a thousand flaming suns, and bade grim night retire ——'

"Nor ought a metaphor to be far-fetched, for then it becomes an enigma. It was thus a gentleman once puzzled his country friend, in telling him, by way of compliment, that he was become a perfect Centaur. His honest friend knew nothing of centaurs, but being fond of riding, was hardly ever off his horse.

"Another extreme remains, the reverse of the too sublime, and that is, the transferring from subjects too contemptible. Such was the case of that poet quoted by Horace, who, to describe winter, wrote—

"'Jupiter hybernas canâ nive conspuit Alpes.'
(Hor., L. ii., Sat. 5.)

"'O'er the cold Alps Jove spits his hoary snow.'

"Nor was that modern poet more fortunate, whom Dryden quotes, and who, trying his genius upon the same subject, supposed winter—

"'To periwig with snow the baldpate woods.'

"With the same class of wits we may arrange that pleasant fellow, who speaking of an old lady whom he had affronted, gave us in one short sentence no fewer than three metaphors. 'I perceive,' said he, 'her back is up—I must curry favour, or the fat will be in the fire.'

"The same word, when transferred to different subjects, produces metaphors very different, as to propriety or impropriety. It is with propriety that we transfer the words, *to embrace*, from human beings to things purely ideal. The metaphor appears just, when we say, to embrace a proposition; to embrace an offer; to embrace an opportunity. Its application,

perhaps, was not quite so elegant, when the old steward wrote to his lord upon the subject of his farm, that, 'if he met any oxen, he would not fail to embrace them.'

"Wolsey with propriety moralizes on his fall in the following beautiful metaphor, taken from vegetable nature :—

" 'This is the state of man : To-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes, to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him :
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost ;
And,—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a ripening,—nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do.'

"In such metaphors (besides their intrinsic elegance) we may say the reader is flattered ; I mean flattered by being left to discover something for himself.

"There are metaphors so obvious, and of course so naturalized, that, ceasing to be metaphors, they become, as it were, the proper words. It is after this manner we say, a sharp fellow, a great orator, the foot of a mountain, the eye of a needle, the bed of a river, to ruminate, to ponder, to edify, etc."

Metaphors should not be mixed, more particularly if taken from subjects which are contrary, as by the orator who once asserted in his speech that, "if cold water were thrown upon a certain measure, it would kindle a flame that would obscure the lustre," etc. They should not be mixed with plain language ; that is, a sentence should not be so framed that some words require to be understood literally and others metaphorically ; and they should not be obscure or incongruous.

Shakespeare, in "Hamlet," has said—

"Or to *take arms* against a *sea* of troubles."

Now, trouble may properly be likened to a sea in which a man is tossed to and fro, or to an enemy

whom he must combat; but to speak of *taking arms* against a *sea*, is an inconsistency which even Shakespeare's authority will not sanction. Some editors have proposed reading *siege* instead of *sea*, which will do away with the inconsistency. We may *take arms* to resist a *siege*.

In Shakespeare's "Henry the Eighth," Wolsey says—

"Say Wolsey, that once *trod* the *ways* of glory,
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,
Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in."

Here the metaphor is confused, and I suggest the following emendation:—

"Say Wolsey, that once *rode* the *waves* of glory,"

which would harmonize with the other lines, for a ship is said to *ride* on the waves.

Milton, in "L'Allegro," says:—

"And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the *melting* soul may *pierce*,
Untwisting all the *chains* that *tie*
The hidden soul of harmony."

Here there is a confusion between a cord which admits of twisting and tying, and a chain which consists of *links*, not *twists*; and is said to *bind*, not to *tie*. There is also an incongruity in *piercing* a *melting* soul, as a solid object only is capable of being pierced. A *melting* one might be *penetrated*.

In the same poem, Milton says—

"Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's *child*,
Warble his *native* wood-notes *wild*."

It is quite appropriate to call Shakespeare the child of Fancy, or to compare him to a bird warbling his native wood-notes; but to represent him as a *child warbling his native wood-notes* is incorrect, because a child does not naturally live and warble in a

wood. An eminent divine has spoken of one "standing on the *wreck* of *ruined ordinances*," not considering that *wreck* applies to a vessel, and *ruin* to a building.

The late Lord Castlereagh was a speaker fond of using metaphors, but had not the ability or did not take care to make them correct. "The question *hinges* upon this *feature*," was a phrase that he more than once employed. His meaning was obvious, but the metaphor was confused. To avoid incongruities of this kind, a knowledge of the primary meaning of the words employed is very important. With similar inaccuracy, but a more ridiculous result, he said, "The right honourable gentleman came down to the House like a crocodile, with his hands in his breeches' pockets!"

The passage in Addison's "Letters from Italy," which Dr. Johnson has so justly ridiculed, is another example of similar confusion:—

"I bridle in my struggling muse with pain,
That longs to launch into a nobler strain."

The muse figured by a horse may, as Dr. Blair says, be *bridled*, but when we speak of *launch*, we make it a ship; and by no force of imagination can it be supposed both a horse and a ship at the same time.

Pope, in his epistle of "Eloise to Abelard," says:—

"All then is full, possessing and possessed,
No craving void left aching in the breast."

A void may be said metaphorically, and with perfect propriety, to crave to be filled; but the metaphor is confused, and all its harmony destroyed, when a *void* is said to *ache*.

Young, in his "Night Thoughts," speaking of old age, says that it should

"Walk thoughtful on the silent, solemn shore
Of that vast ocean it must sail so soon."

This is beautiful; but when he adds in the same sentence—

“And put good works on board, and wait the wind
That shortly bears us into worlds unknown,”

he spoils his metaphor, and forgets that he has represented old age upon the shore, and not as a ship to carry “good works.”

“But we must not,” says Whately “be too fastidious on this point. Words, which by long use in a transferred sense, have lost nearly all their metaphorical force, may fairly be combined in a manner which, taking them literally, would be incongruous. It would savour of hypercriticism to object to such an expression as, ‘fertile source.’”

The other figures are the

Simile or *Comparison*, expressing the resemblance which one thing bears to another; as, “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.”

Hyperbole, in which the expression is an exaggeration of the meaning intended to be conveyed, or by which things are represented as much greater or less, better or worse, than they really are; as, “If a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.” “They were swifter than eagles.” “He was so gaunt, the case of a flageolet was a mansion for him.”

Synecdoche, in which the whole of a thing is put for a part, or a part for the whole, the genus for the species, or the species for the genus, and the like, often presenting the object in a very vivid manner to the mind; as, “A fleet of ten *sail*,” which suggests a group of vessels at sea more clearly and also more correctly than “ten *ships*,” which might be in dock. “All *hands* to the pumps,” suggests the very attitude of pumping more strikingly than “all *men*.”

Metonymy, in which one word is put for another; or a change of names which have some relation to each other; as when we say “A man keeps a good

table," instead of good *provisions* ; " We read Milton," that is, his *poems* or *writings* ; " They have Moses and the prophets," that is, their *books* or *writings* ; a man has a clear *head*, that is, *understanding*, *intellect* ; a warm *heart*, that is, *affections*.

Irony, which is a kind of ridicule, exposing the errors or faults of others, by seeming to adopt, approve, or defend them ; or an apparent assent to a proposition given, in such a tone, or under such circumstances, that opposite opinions or feelings are implied.

Prosopopæia, in which, says Webster, " Things are represented as persons, or by which things inanimate are spoken of as animated beings, or by which an absent person is introduced as speaking, or a deceased person is represented as alive and present. It includes *Personification*, but is more extensive in its application," and also

Apostrophe, which is a turning away from the real auditory and object of address and speaking to a dead, absent, or imaginary person, as if present ; as, " Oh, Absalom, my son, my son."

Personification, in which an inanimate object is represented as animated, or endowed with personality ; as, " The sea saw it and fled ; the deep uttered his voice, and lifted his hands on high ; " " Confusion heard his voice ; " and thus the earth is said to *thirst* for rain, to *smile* with plenty, etc. The highest degree of personification is when inanimate objects are apostrophized as intelligent beings.

Allegory, which, says Webster, is " a figurative sentence or discourse, in which the principal subject is described by another subject resembling it in its properties and circumstances. The principal subject is thus kept out of view, and we are left to collect the intentions of the writer or speaker by the resemblance of the secondary to the primary object. The distinction in Scripture between a *parable* and an *allegory* is said to be, that a parable is a *supposed*

history, and an allegory a figurative application of *real* facts. An allegory is called a continued metaphor. Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and Spenser's 'Faery Queen,' are celebrated examples of the allegory. An *apologue* differs from a *parable* in this: the parable is drawn from events which take place among mankind, and therefore requires probability in the narrative; the *apologue* is founded on supposed actions of brutes or inanimate things, and therefore is not limited by strict rules of probability. Æsop's Fables are good examples of *apologues*." They may all be employed in oratory with effect, if bearing on the subject and not too long.

Quotations from the poets may often be introduced into speeches with great effect, but they should be carefully and sparingly used, and always be so appropriate as to seem almost to form part of the speech. When a poetic quotation is used to conclude a speech, it should be stronger than the preceding passage, and form a climax to the whole.

The interrogation may be used with great effect in public speaking, of which admirable examples will be found in the orations of Demosthenes. But they should not be used too frequently.

In conclusion, every one who has to speak in public should study and practice Elocution, so much neglected by the moderns, for justly does Quintilian affirm, "that a very indifferent speech well delivered will produce a greater effect than the best, if destitute of that advantage." For ample instructions in the Art of Delivery, see

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